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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001449

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG, AF/C, NEA
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: ASEC PGOV PREL KPKO UN AU SU

SUBJECT: TDRA OFFICIALS FEAR ZAGHAWA DOMINANCE IN
SLM/MINNAWI AND DARFUR AS A WHOLE

REF: KHARTOUM 1383

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On September 23, the leaders of both the Compensation and Land Commissions in the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA) told poloff that they fear the Zaghawa tribe's dominance in Darfur and the Sudan Liberation Movement of Minni Minnawi (SLM/MM). Head of the Land Commission, Adam Abdulrahman Adam, emphasized that Minnawi lacks control over many unruly Zaghawa commanders, who regularly pillage non-Zaghawa villages, steal livestock throughout Darfur, and kill civilians attempting to defend themselves against these attacks. Meanwhile, Chairman of the Compensation Committee, Abulgasim Ahmed Abulgasim, stated that the Zaghawa lead all of the most active rebel movements, and will therefore dominate future negotiations on Darfur, a prospect that is unacceptable to the majority of Darfuris.
END SUMMARY.

ZAGHAWA AND SLM/MM RAIDING NEIGHBORING TRIBES

¶2. (SBU) On September 22, TDRA Land Commissioner Adam called poloff and reported that on September 19 and 20, SLM/MM supported Zaghawa raids on Gusa Jemed (near Wad'a), stealing animals, destroying homes, and killing four people of the Mima tribe (of which Adam is a member.) Adam added that on September 21, another SLM force of approximately twenty vehicles gathered near Id Al-Beida (outside of Dar Es Salaam) and conducted raids on Om Shajar, burning three villages, and allegedly displacing 1,500 people. Adam stated that this form of raiding has intensified in the last three months, and that "all of Darfur is slowly starting to turn against the Zaghawa." Adam claimed that this is the 26th raid since he started to document this form of activity following the signing of the DPA. Adam also claimed that the SLM/Zaghawa have killed over 150 people in such raids in the last two years. Presidential Advisor Abdullah Masar told CDA Fernandez that he had just received a delegation from the Mima, a small African tribe, on September 24 complaining about their defenselessness before such depredations.

"THIS IS OUT OF MINNI'S CONTROL"

¶3. (C) In a separate meeting with both Abulgasim and Adam on September 23, Adam again focused on SLM/MM's lawlessness and raiding. Adam stated that during his hiatus in Khartoum, Minnawi "was in denial about what his commanders and soldiers were doing." Since his return to the field and following multiple heated conversations with the TDRA Land Commissioner, Minnawi has "finally realized what is

happening, but this is now out of his control." Adam admitted that the identity of the raiders is not always clear, as sometimes Zaghawa loosely affiliated with SLM/MM initiate the first raid, and are later protected by SLM/MM. In other instances, SLM/MM fighters have been directly responsible for the attacks. Adam said that SLM has been keen to entirely disarm populations in areas of their control, tax the local population, and take total control over all functions normally played by a government. Abulgasim emphasized that it is unacceptable that Darfur has become more dangerous since the signing of the DPA and that SLM/MM and the Zaghawa are largely responsible for this.

TAHA-MINNAWI AGREEMENT

¶4. (C) Abulgasim and Adam characterized the Taha-Minnawi agreement on September 19 as "a good first step," but criticized SLM/MM as unable to bring peace and stability to Darfur. Both TDRA leaders stated that once a diverse, multi-ethnic movement, SLM/MM has returned to its Zaghawa base, and is no longer representative of the people of Darfur. Unlike Muhammad Tijani (ref b,) these TDRA representatives stated that Taha's renewed interest in Darfur is part of a greater power struggle within the NCP. "Taha is trying to find a diplomatic solution to Darfur, and if he succeeds, Nafie's influence will decline, as Nafie has advocated for a military solution to Darfur," stated Abulgasim. Minni Minnawi and Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie are on opposite sides of a scale, "if one is going up, the other goes down," asserted Abulgasim.

PEACE PROCESS

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¶5. (C) Both Abulgasim and Adam were most pessimistic when discussing the peace process. Abulgasim stated that he recently met with the Qatari Ambassador in Khartoum to discuss the Qatari-French initiative. According to Abulgasim, the Qatari Ambassador is "simplistic, afraid of the NCP, and very unimpressive" (Note: CDA Fernandez met with the Qatari Ambassador the same week and can confirm that analysis. Whatever views the Qataris have to date on Darfur seem to be filtering from UN/AU Mediator Bassole, or less helpfully, from the NCP or Arab League. End note). Abulgasim noted that the Qatari Ambassador had no understanding of Darfur or how to conduct negotiations. Abulgasim also stated that he met with the Arab League's Amr Musa on September 22 in Cairo. Musa reportedly told Abulgasim that he was confused by the Qatari initiative and apologized for the Arab League's distant, slow, and largely indifferent response to Darfur for the last five years. (Note: This assessment of the Qatari plan tracks with that of the Egyptian embassy in Khartoum. On September 22, Egyptian political officer Tamr Azzam told poloff that the GoE was "surprised" by the Qatari initiative, and that Egyptian poloffs in Khartoum have not been able to get "anything specific about the Qatari plan" from their Qatari counterparts in Khartoum. End Note.) According to Abulgasim, Musa also heavily criticized Presidential Advisor and former Foreign Minister, Mustafa Osman Ismail, saying, "he is stupid and has just been telling lies all of this time." Both Abulgasim and Adam acknowledged that the GoS is feverishly trying to formulate its Sudan People's Initiative and may be able to "come up with something like a general framework, but when it comes to the issue of participation, it will become a dogfight."

¶6. (C) Both Adam and Abulgasim expressed fear that as the Zaghawa dominate the most active rebel groups (i.e. JEM, SLM/MM, Unity, and elements of the dissolved URF,) this small but aggressive ethnic group will control future negotiations about Darfur. Although Abdul Wahid Al-Nur has support among the Fur and IDPs, "without an effective military presence, his significance is diminished." Adam and Abulgasim described this Zaghawa dominance as "a disaster," and suggested that the participation of non-military actors (i.e.

civil society representatives, traditional and tribal leaders, etc.) should be the focus of future negotiations. "No one will accept Zaghawa rule after the last couple of years," asserted Adam.

¶7. (C) At the end of the meeting, Adam passed poloff the latest work of the Land Commission, including a lengthy "Terms of Reference" for the commission's future research that Adam estimates will cost approximately 20 million USD. Abulgasim also stated that the Compensation Committee's work is proceeding well, and promised to deliver a "groundbreaking" report to poloff. Adam and Abulgasim ended the meeting requesting support for a small group of Darfur's leaders to travel to Washington. When asked about which leaders would travel, Adam and Abulgasim disagreed, but concurred that, "the group should be small and help inform policy makers and the U.S. presidential candidates about Darfur during this difficult period."

¶8. (C) COMMENT: Abulgasim and Adam appeared to be speaking "off the cuff" while proposing a trip to Washington, and we do not believe that a visit at this time will further U.S. goals in Darfur or Sudan. We share Abulgasim's and Adam's concern about disproportionate Zaghawa influence in Darfur and within SLM/MM. There is widespread suspicion and dislike among both Darfur's African and Arab tribes about Zaghawa hegemony, mirroring Zaghawa control of neighboring Chad. This small, tough and smart tribe punches way above its weight in Darfur. The question remains, however, how to empower multi-ethnic civil society leaders without creating a new artificial political class or providing a new target for the NCP's infiltration and manipulation. Tribalism was always important in Darfur but the past five years' violence seems to have only intensified this feeling. END COMMENT.

FERNANDEZ